

With **April 18th** fast approaching, you should be preparing for the tax filing process. Whether you plan to do your taxes yourself or hire a tax preparer, if you are struggling as to where to start, the IRS and the Better Business Bureau have prepared a list of the top 10 tax filing tips to help:

1. Start gathering your records:

Gather any documents or forms you'll need, such as receipts, canceled checks and other documents that support income or deductions you're claiming on your return.

2. Be on the lookout:

W-2s and 1099s should have arrived from your employer by now and you'll need these to file your tax return.

3. Use Free File:

Everyone can find an option to prepare their tax return and e-file it for free. If your adjusted gross income (AGI) was \$58,000 or less last year, you qualify for free tax software that is offered through a partnership with various companies. If your AGI was more than \$58,000 or if you feel comfortable preparing your own tax return, you can utilize Free File Fillable Forms the electronic versions of IRS paper forms.

4. Try IRS e-file:

According to the IRS, 70 percent of taxpayers use IRS e-file, and almost 1 billion returns have been processed safely and securely. Starting in 2011, many tax preparers will be required to use e-file, so make sure to ask about your filing options. If you owe taxes, payment options are

available allowing you to file immediately and pay by the tax deadline. Best of all, combine e-file with direct deposit and you get your refund in as few as 10 days.

5. Consider your filing options:

There are different options for filing your tax return. You can prepare it yourself, pay a preparer, utilize a volunteer preparer service, or even meet with the IRS. If you are eligible, you can meet with someone free of charge face-to-face at an IRS office or volunteer site. Give yourself time to consider the different options and find the one that best suits your needs.

6. Consider Direct Deposit:

If you elect to have your refund directly deposited into your bank account, you'll receive it faster than waiting for a paper check.

7. Visit the IRS website:

The official IRS website, www.irs.gov, is a great place to find everything you'll need to file your tax return including forms, publications, tips, answers to frequently asked questions and updates on tax law changes.

8. Remember IRS Publication 17:

It's a comprehensive collection of information for taxpayers highlighting everything you'll need to know when filing your return.

9. Review

Don't rush. Be sure to double-check all information, particularly Social Security Numbers and math calculations as these are the most common errors made on returns.

10. Don't panic

If you run into a problem, remember the IRS is available to help. You can contact the IRS at www.irs.gov or by calling them toll-free at 800-829-1040.